

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3-13 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 12, and 13 are amended; and Claim 2 is canceled by the present amendment.

Applicants respectfully submit that claim amendments find support in the claims and specification as originally filed. Thus, no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action Claims 1, 5-8, and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirama et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,427,940, hereinafter “Hirama”); Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirama in view of Yamashita (U.S. Patent No. 6,756,759); Claim 9 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirama in view of Hickman (U.S. Patent No. 5,828,213); Claim 10 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirama in view of Hamelin et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,804,964, hereinafter “Hamelin”), and Claims 2 and 4 were indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The outstanding Office Action does not address Claims 11 and 12 which were properly added by Preliminary Amendment received May 18, 2006. Accordingly, Applicants understand Claims 11 and 12 to be allowed in the present application.

Initially, Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication of allowable subject matter in Claim 2. Accordingly, independent Claim 1 is amended to recite the features of original Claim 2 as suggested in the Office Action, thereby rendering moot the rejections of Claim 1, and claims depending therefrom, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claim 1, and all claims depending therefrom, are allowable.

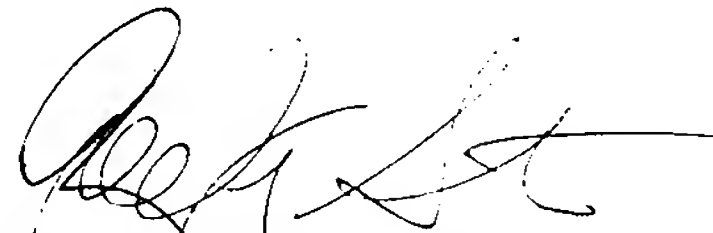
Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment this application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 06/04)



Eckhard H. Kuesters
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 28,870

Zachary S. Stern
Registration No. 54,719

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